

A Brief History of Vote by Mail

1981	The Oregon Legislature approves a test of vote by mail (VBM) for local elections.
1987	VBM made permanent; majority of counties use it for local/special elections.
June 1993	First special statewide election by mail – 39 percent turnout.
May 1995	Second special statewide election by mail – 44 percent turnout.
Spring/Summer 1995	The Oregon Legislature approves a proposal to expand VBM to primary and general elections. The Governor vetoes the bill.
December 1995	Oregon becomes the first state to conduct a primary election totally by mail to nominate candidates to fill a vacancy in a federal office – 58 percent turnout.
January 1996	Oregon becomes the first state to conduct a general election totally by mail to fill a vacancy in a federal office when it selects Senator Ron Wyden to replace Bob Packwood – 66 percent turnout.
March 1996	Oregon holds the country's second VBM presidential primary. (The first VBM presidential primary was held by North Dakota, just weeks prior to Oregon's election.) – 58 percent turnout.
May 1997	Sixth special statewide election by mail – 42 percent turnout.
Spring/Summer 1997	The Oregon House of Representatives approves a proposal to expand VBM to primary and general elections. The bill dies in a Senate committee. The Governor would have signed the bill into law.
November 1997	Seventh special statewide election by mail – 60 percent turnout.
May 1998	Primary election at the polls. Forty-one percent of registered voters in Oregon are permanent absentee voters. Overall, the state posts a record low turnout at 35 percent. Absentee ballots represent nearly two-thirds of all ballots cast; Oregon becomes the first state to have more ballots cast by mail than at the polls during a polling place election. Absentee voter turnout was 53 percent, compared to a turnout at the polls of 22 percent.
June 1998	Supporters of expanding VBM to primary and general elections use the initiative to put the issue on the November general election ballot. No paid signature gatherers were used to put the measure on the ballot – a first since 1994.
November 3, 1998	Oregon voters decide to expand VBM to primary and general elections by a vote of 757,204 to 334,021.
November 2, 1999	Eighth special statewide election by mail - 38 percent turnout.
May 2000	Presidential Primary election VBM - 51 percent turnout.
November 2000	First VBM Presidential General election - 79 percent turnout.
May 2002	Primary election VBM - 46 percent turnout.
September 2002	Special election for two statewide measures VBM - 44 percent turnout.
November 2002	General election VBM - 69 percent turnout.

January 2003	Special election for a statewide measure VBM - 66 percent turnout.
September 2003	Special election for a statewide measure VBM - 35 percent turnout.
February 2004	Special election for a statewide measure VBM - 63 percent turnout.
May 2004	Presidential Primary election VBM - 46 percent turnout.
November 2004	Presidential General election VBM. Voter registration exceeds 2 million - 86 percent turnout.
May 2006	Primary election VBM - 38 percent turnout.
November 2006	General election VBM - 70 percent turnout.